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VEXAT CENSURA COLUMBAS.

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The Publiſher of the CENSOR is requeſted, if he ſees fit, to communicate the following to the Publick. FREEMAN.

IT certainly does great honour to any member of the community to ſee him intereſt himſelf in its welfare, and maintain with a well-tempered zeal thoſe forms and inſtitutions by which the publick good is ſecured: But it is a great misfortune, attendant on human nature, that when matters of civil right give riſe to political diſputes in a ſtate, the men, who engage in them at firſt upon principle, ſuffer their paſſions to be engaged until, at length in the warmth of their zeal, they loſe ſight of the main object which firſt engaged their attention: Or it may be ſome artful ambitious man joins the oppoſition, harangues the multitude, and gets the lead, and the virtuous patriot who began it, aſhamed of his company, retires behind the ſcenes. Perſonal invective ſucceeds, and now the granting the thing at firſt contended for, will not ſatisfy the complainants; freſh claims are ſet up, new demands are made, the breach is widened all means of accommodation are defeated, and, in the end, the forward partizan, who has thus attracted the notice of his fellow-citizens, becomes the object either of contempt or vindictive reſentment. Theſe are the probable conſequences of miſguided zeal, or a zeal exerted upon trifling occaſions or upon wrong objects.

GREAT occaſions call for men of zeal and fortitude, tempered with wiſdom and moderation: Such men, in caſes of real grievance, are moſt likely to procure redreſs if the people can be perſuaded to liſten to them.

IF we recur to the Engliſh hiſtory we ſhall find theſe obſervations verified by facts; and I am much miſtaken, if our own will not afford us ſome ſimilar proofs. I ſhall illuſtrate my ſubject by reviewing the different efforts made in England in the reigns of Charles I. and James II. in favour of liberty and the conſtitution, and ſome recent efforts of our own. The riſe of the troubles in the reign of Charles I. are pointed out; and the merits of the cauſe briefly ſtated by a celebrated writer, as follows: * "The duties "of tonnage and poundage were in Henry the fifth's time grant-

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* Blackſtone's Commentaries, P. 315, 16.

" ed him for life by a ſtatute in the third year of his reign ;
" and again to Edward IV. for the term of his life alſo : Since
" which time they were regularly granted to all his ſucceſſors for
" life, ſometimes at their firſt, ſometimes at other ſubſequent
" Parliaments until the reign of Charles I. when it was un-
" conſtitutionally levied and taken for fifteen years together ;
" which was one of the cauſes of thoſe unhappy diſcontents,
" juſtifiable at firſt in too many inſtances, but which degenerated
" at laſt into cauſeleſs rebellion and murder. For as in every
" other, ſo in this particular caſe, the King (previous to the
" commencement of hoſtilities) gave the nation ample ſatisfac-
" tion for the errors of his former conduct by paſſing an act
" whereby he renounced all power in the Crown of levying the
" duty of tonnage and poundage without the expreſs conſent
" of Parliament, and alſo all power of impoſition upon any mer-
" chandizes whatever."

THE King had undoubtedly entertained very high notions of the royal prerogative, and had men about him who did not ceaſe their endeavours to rivet them in his mind. The people were impreſſed with a jealouſy of the King's ſincerity in making theſe conceſſions and took up arms. Anon, Cromwell a bold and crafty man ſets himſelf at the head of the army, and by their means overturns that very conſtitution, the preſervation of which was the firſt ground of the quarrel. The Houſe of Lords is declared uſeleſs, and the Commons are dragooned into the ſupport of this Leader's meaſures. The King is brought to the block, and Cromwell is declared Protector of the Commonwealth : He aſſumed the government, but governed by the army. How long he could have maintained his ground is uncertain : It is not probable that an obſcure commoner without riches himſelf, and without connections with the great men of the nation would have been long ſuffered to bear the ſway over them. He died opportunely for his own glory. He dared not aſſume the title of King, he therefore could not have governed the nation upon the old conſtitution ; and it was beyond the compaſs of his genius or perhaps any other man's to have formed a better. The government devolved on his ſon ; he held the reins a very little while, one and another aſſumed them after him, but none of them could guide the ſtate. The conſtitution was broken and disjointed, and could not be healed without recurring to firſt principles ; and General Monk had the honour at the head of the army (though conſidering the general diſpoſition of the people it required little addreſs) to bring in the King. Thus after the loſs of 100,000 fighting men in the quarrel, the reſtoration took place, and King Charles II. after 12 years exile mounted the throne without terms or conditions.

IT may be ſaid that England was greatly improved in trade and riches during the uſurpation ; but let it be remembered, that it had never been at ſo high a pitch of wealth as

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it was afterwards in the year 1688, during the reign of King James II. The tonnage of the royal navy as well as that of the merchant ſhips was that year according to Dr. Davenant near double of what it had been but twenty-two years back. Yes—But Cromwell maintained the nation's glory in the eyes of the reſt of Europe. True—But was this an equivalent for the loſs of the conſtitution? For there was not one atom of it left: No King: No Houſe of Lords, and a Houſe of Commons acting under reſtraint. If wealth and honour conſtitute national happineſs, and we can obtain them under any form of government, we may aſk the men who make this reply, why they ſo earneſtly contend for the preſent conſtitution, while they endanger the loſs, or at leaſt the ſuſpenſion of theſe bleſſings in the quarrel?

Soon after the reſtoration of King Charles, the doctrines of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance obtained in the nation, until his brother and ſucceſſor James II. attempting under the ſanction of theſe doctrines to introduce popery; the fallacy of them appeared ſo glaring, and the conſequences ſo miſchievous, that the beſt men in the kingdom thought it high time not only to recur once more to firſt principles, but ſo to explain and eſtabliſh them as to render the Britiſh form of government the pride and glory of the nation and the envy of our neighbours. The deſign was conducted by the greateſt and wiſeſt men of the nation with that harmony and by ſuch diſpaſſionate meaſures, that another Prince was ſeated on the throne without bloodſhed, and the conſtitution ſo aſcertained that every Engliſhman muſt wiſh to have this noble fabrick continue unimpaired to the lateſt ages.

These two caſes viewed and conſidered in contraſt confirm the truth of the principle I firſt laid down, that zeal and fortitude tempered with wiſdom and moderation are the moſt likely means of procuring a people redreſs when they labour under real grievances.

And now, my countrymen, can we ſay that our grievances have been ſuch as to juſtify the violent meaſures which have been uſed among us, or to ſhew the wiſdom of thoſe, who led the people to the choice or urged them on to the execution of them; by which after all, we are now in a worſe ſituation, than when we firſt began the oppoſition. I blame not my countrymen in general; they acted upon the beſt information they had: Let thoſe alone anſwer for the miſchiefs brought upon us, who have by their deceitful arts and intemperate zeal procured them. It is true the ſtamp-act was repealed after the moſt flagrant acts of violence committed in a declared oppoſition to the Britiſh Legiſlature: But it ſhould be remembered that this repeal had in all probability never taken place, if a change in the miniſtry had not alſo taken place at this very juncture; this gave the new miniſter an opportunity of throwing an odium on his predeceſſor, which it is natural to imagine he was willing enough to avail himſelf of: And yet he would not venture to patronize the repeal without bringing in an act declaring and eſtabliſhing the right of Parliament to bind the

colonies

colonies, which publick declaration had never before been made, and probably would not have been made to this day, and for a long time to come, had they not been rouſed by this furious oppoſition, to aſſert it. Would not moderation then and perſeverance in ſome ſteady plan of oppoſition been better adapted to procure ſome permanent relief? But inſtead of this, even after the repeal, the flaming zealots did not think fit to alter their ſyſtem, the moſt illiberal triumph enſued; men in power were inſulted, anniverſary days were ſet apart to commemorate both the victory and the violent meaſures by which they would be thought to have obtained it: Inſomuch that the Parliament to convince us of our miſtake, once more thought fit to paſs an act for laying other duties on the colonies, and to ſhew us that they ſtill maintained their claim of right, it was expreſſly declared in the act that the intention of it was to raiſe a revenue. Officers were appointed for the purpoſes of this act and other purpoſes of the revenue and ſtationed in Boſton: Freſh diſorders aroſe; it was therefore judged proper to ſend a ſquadron of men of war and one or two regiments to protect them. Theſe meaſures of the Britiſh government were followed by a combination not to import certain of the manufactures of Great-Britain, enforced by the moſt unheard of acts of deſpotiſm. The act has been ſince repea'ed in part; but the principle upon which it was founded is ſtill aſſerted and maintained, and the duty upon tea is ſtill collected. The merchants in the mean time ſuffered the loſs of one years buſineſs without effecting any good to the publick, and to make themſelves amends, have, it is ſuppoſed ſince that, doubled their importations, there having more than ſixty ſail of veſſels entered from Great-Britain at the port of Boſton only, within the laſt nine months. The goods imported in them are eagerly bought up by the people; a plain demonſtration both that the importers were forceably hindered in their buſineſs, and that the neceſſities of the people called for freſh ſupplies of goods. The abſurdity of the meaſure was now ſo apparent that our wrongheaded politicians could no longer enforce the reſtraint: Neceſſity broke through it, and it died away without obtaining any one good end after all the hardſhip and inconvenience with which it was attended. I recount theſe things, my countrymen, not to charge you with them, but to ſhew you the bleſſed fruits of the abſurd meaſures of our pretended patriots, and how unequal theſe ſtate-menders have been to the important buſineſs they forced themſelves upon, and to point out the miſchiefs they have brought upon the community, for all which they ſtand amenable at the bar of the injured publick.

(Under favour of the Publick this ſubject will be purſued in one or two ſubſequent numbers of the CENSOR, and be followed by an attempt to ſhew what ſenſe both the kingdom and the colonies had at firſt and continued to have for 150 years of their relation each to the other.

☞ Our Readers are deſired to correct a number of gramatical errors, which eſcaped notice until ſome of the Papers of Saturday laſt were printed off.